

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

Questions and Answers

Section #1 – Background

Q1. What is NIMO?

A1. The National Interagency Incident Management Organization (NIMO) has two elements. One is the nine recommendations for improving response to complex incident management, and the other is the establishment of NIMO teams as full-time standing incident management teams (IMTs). These are professional incident management organizations focused on leadership, safety, cost efficiency and training for all-hazard incident management including wildland fire incidents. Current interagency incident management members are employed in other full-time positions and only perform their incident management duties on an emergency, call-when-needed basis.

Q2. What is the origin of the NIMO concept?

A2. The idea for NIMO grew out of the 2000 report “*USDA Forest Service: An Agency Strategy for Fire Management*” also called the Jacobs report. Following the Jacobs Report, the *National Interagency Complex Incident Management Organization Study* (NICIMOS) completed in February of 2005 provides nine recommendations to improve complex incident management capability. The recommended organization model to implement the recommendations was seven short Type 1 National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) Teams. These teams would support complex incidents, enhance training, develop non-traditional partnerships and enhance home unit capabilities for fuels projects and work to implement the other recommendations.

These reports were generated by interagency teams that included federal, state and local fire and aviation professionals and addressed the challenges and options of responding to wildland fire and all-hazard incidents. The Jacobs Report and the 2005 *National Interagency Complex Incident Management Organization Study* are available at www.nifc.gov/nimo/

Q3. Who chartered the 2005 NICIMOS study?

A3. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) chartered the team that developed the 2005 study. NWCG accepted the report in 2005, and established a group of interagency fire and aviation professionals to develop a NIMO implementation plan which was delivered and approved by NWCG in October 2005 and by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB) in January, 2006.

Q4. What are the key recommendations from the NICIMOS study that were accepted by NWCG and NFAEB?

A4. The NICIMOS study developed nine key recommendations to improve complex incident management, pursue a more aggressive hazardous fuels program and established the NIMO teams concept. The NIMO implementation team has developed action items for each of these key recommendations.

- **Improved Capacity and Capability:** Change federal agency policy to require employee participation on/or in support of incident management. Develop incident management qualification requirements for selection of unit-level agency administrators.
- **Type 3 Incident Management Organizations:** Significantly increase the number of qualified personnel to staff Type 3 wildland extended attack incidents.
- **Training:** Streamline the NWCG fire training and qualifications program to reduce redundancy and to more effectively focus on the needs of the various positions.
- **National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group Incident Management Team Management:** The National MAC is responsible for the standardization and mobilization of NIMO and Type 1 teams through and IMT Coordinator at NIFC.
- **Legal Authorities:** Given the adoption of both the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), local, state, and federal agencies across America will be trained in a common system of incident management. The underlying legal authorities need to be adopted to allow the effective implementation of incident management at and across all levels of government.
- **Non-Traditional Partnerships:** Actively seek partnerships with other federal agencies (i.e. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, and Federal Emergency Management Agency) to improve capacity for the development and utilization of both fire and non-fire incident management personnel.
- **Improved Hiring Practices:** Improve emergency hiring practices to increase incident management capability and capacity.
- **Standardized Contracts:** Use the following to improve efficiencies in wildland fire management: standardized pay rates, contracts, performance standards, and common definitions of inherent government functions.
- **Complex Incident Management:** Develop a new model for managing complex incidents. The current model of adding more and more resources should be replaced with a system that utilizes social values, significant resource values, and cost benefits in the decision making process. Incorporation of modules that allow the expansion of personnel and equipment in a cost effective manner should be utilized when the investments are effective and necessary.

Q5. Why is the organization change to create NIMO teams needed?

A5. During the last decade, various internal reviews and reports by land management agencies, Congressional subcommittees, the General Accounting Office, Office of Management and Budget, and the National Academy of Public Administration *all* confirm:

- Climatic changes, predictions for continued drought conditions and excessive fuel hazards have set the stage for increased and more severe wildland fires on public and private lands.
- The cost to protect these lands from wildland fire is rising.
- Major cultural and demographic changes in workforce and programmatic changes in the wildland agencies are resulting in a reduction in agency workforce participation on large federal incident management teams.
- The competing workload of simultaneously meeting both fire program management and resource management objectives on home units—while also responding to the needs of complex incident management—has brought the wildland agencies to a strategic crossroads.
- There are an increasing numbers of long duration and all-hazard assignments for federal incident management teams.

Section #2 – Describing NIMO teams and the IMT Environment

Q1: What comprises the NIMO teams?

A1. NIMO's recommended IMT organization will have the following positions and responsibilities:

- Under the Recommended Option, seven teams will be formed consisting of:
 - Incident Commander, Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, Finance/Administration Section Chief, Safety Officer and Information Officer. Three additional call-when-needed positions will be carried by each team to meet NWCG short-team standards.
- NIMO assignments would include long term complex wildland fire management and all-hazard incidents.
- These incident management teams have clearly-defined consistent responsibilities and performance expectations.
- The implementation plan calls for the teams to be stationed in: Atlanta, GA (SE); Tucson, AZ (SW); Denver, CO (RM); Boise, ID (GB); Missoula, MT (NR); Portland, OR (NW); and Sacramento, CA (CA).
- NWCG and NFAEB have approved the phase-in of the first two teams in Boise and Atlanta for 2006/2007.
- The Forest Service and the DOI agencies are exploring alternative work arrangements to retain flexibility. This may mean not all team members will move to the team base city.
- If qualified state personnel indicate an interest, members can come from state agencies under an Interagency Personnel Action (IPA).
- Assignments to NIMO will be a two to five year commitment.

Q2. How would these teams be rotated with the current Geographic Teams during the pilot period?

A2. During the national fire season (typically March through November), these seven teams respond to and are expected to excel in managing complex and long-duration incidents. The NIMO incident management assignments are determined and managed by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) through an IMT Coordinator. Current Geographic Teams would continue to be assigned on a rotation developed by each Geographic Area. NIMO teams would take all assignments during the off season (December through February).

Q3. Won't NIMO be competing for qualified individuals?

A3. Yes, and since the NIMO teams will be competing for a limited number of the highest qualified incident management professionals, some of the competition will be mitigated by phasing in the teams and, in the long term, by using non-traditional partners from other federal and state agencies who are training under the NIMS system. Enhancing the non-traditional partnerships is one of the nine NIMO recommendations.

Establishing NIMO teams and strengthening Type 3 local capability may reduce the number of Geographic Teams over the next ten years. However, the NIMO IMTs will order incident personnel through the national ROSS system to offer experience to individuals who are approved to take only one or two firefighting assignments so that the work on the home unit still gets accomplished. This will allow more individuals who cannot commit to teams gain and retain qualifications as part of the agencies' militia and increase participation in the long term.

Q4. Why a ten-person NIMO IMT when our current incident management teams have 33 members assigned and mobilized to incidents?

A4. Many of the incidents that NIMO teams will be managing will require less staffing. Having fulltime 33-person incident management teams is cost prohibitive. A 10-person short team will be more responsive to the types of incidents that NIMO will be managing. When a larger organization is needed the NIMO team can be expanded using individuals from within the wildland fire community and the non-traditional ranks.

Q5. What is the proposed schedule for NIMO team implementation?

A5. NWCG and NFAEB approved a pilot phased-in approach with two Incident Management Teams established in 2006 in Boise, Idaho and Atlanta, Georgia respectively. The Implementation Task Group created the position descriptions with input from subject matter experts and suggested evaluation criteria. The Forest Service and the DOI agencies are exploring alternative work arrangements to retain flexibility. This may mean not all team members will move to the team base city.

Q6. What other role and responsibilities will the NIMO teams have?

A6. NIMO IMTs will develop an annual program of work with the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group. Some duties may include:

- Obtaining and maintaining expertise in all-hazard response through development, instruction and participation in pertinent training, drills and simulations. Maintain training records, training agreements and facilitate the acquisition of formal training, mentoring and on-the-job experience.

- Develop relationships and agreements with fire service, emergency management and other federal, state and local agencies to provide overhead personnel for wildland and all-hazard incidents under federal jurisdiction. Integrate responders from state and local cooperators into the wildland fire qualification system (IQCS), and assist with maintenance of qualifications.
- Provide leadership in the effort to standardize rules, guiding principles and practices for both wildland fire and all-hazard management across federal, state and local agencies. Develop new methods for integrating wildfire and all-hazard management on a national scale, and implement a new suppression doctrine.
- Implement the College of Command and Staff as described in the S-520/620 course review and recruit, train, develop, maintain, and mentor trainees/interns into the Incident Management System. Lead participation in and development of formal training and training academies. Work with the NWCG Training Working Team to review and update NWCG courses in order to expedite and streamline training.
- Develop and maintain a National and Geographic Incident Management Team Operations Guide and a communications network with National and Geographic IC/AC Groups and other functional groups (Logistics, FBA, working teams, ESF 4, FEMA and NFA).
- Develop monitoring plans to analyze the impact of NIMO on National Fire Plan fuel treatment accomplishment objectives. Develop performance measures and a monitoring plan for the NIMO organization. Participate in the formal evaluation of NIMO at the conclusion of the pilot study.
- With national fire management leadership, develop new policies and approaches to managing large and complex incidents. Provide training, advice and counsel to line officers/agency administrators in large, complex incident management including implementing appropriate management response for late season fires.
- Work with agency managers to revise and develop land and resource management plans conducive with effective wildland fire and all-hazard incident management. Assist local units in planning, executing and conducting technical reviews of large, landscape-scale prescribed fire plans and projects.
- Working with research, develop new methods for dealing with managing large fire management (mega fires) including new methods for cost containment. Promote the development and adoption of new technologies that improve safety and contain incident management costs.
- Conduct agency preparedness and other management reviews, including investigations. Analyze incident management reviews and investigations and make recommendations on future policies and management.

Q7: How will NIMO teams be able to help with natural resource/hazardous fuels work?

A7. Part of the benefit of creating NIMO teams for all-hazard and long-duration wildfire incidents will be the release of many employees from their commitments to IMT assignments. While these core fire personnel can status themselves to be dispatched as single resources according to supervisory direction, they will also have the opportunity to be on the home unit for longer periods of time to complete the planning and implementation of the natural resource management work including hazardous fuel reduction projects.

NIMO teams will also be involved in technical reviews of Type 1 prescribed fire burn plans, and through their training assignments continue to develop expertise in fire use management and prescribed fire management qualifications.

Section #3 – Training and Qualifications

Q1. Is the NIMO team program addressing the problem of getting individuals to the Type 1 qualifications?

A1. Yes. This is one of the issues addressed by the NICIMOS study and will be a goal for the NIMO teams. The teams will recruit, train and mentor employees to the Type 1 qualification level. There may be short term impacts to current teams, but the longer view envisions more opportunities to get the agencies' militia and fire professionals trained and mentored by the NIMO teams. The NIMO implementation team identified recommendations and action items such as establishing distance learning opportunities, using NIMO teams to create a "College of Command and Staff", working with the National Fire Administration and National Fire Academy to create core competencies for each of the ICS/NIMS positions, and increasing the use of simulations to help gain experience.

Q2. Why is there a need to create or strengthen Type 3 organizations?

A2. One of the NICIMOS recommendations calls for significantly enhancing interagency Type 3 incident management capability. These organizations will be used for improved rapid initial and extended attack activities at the local units. This will respond to Line Officer's concerns that experienced firefighters remain available on the local unit for fire response rather than committing to an IMT that could be off-unit for part of the fire season. Qualifications for Type 3 organization members will be identified in the 2006 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Redbook and bluebook). This would improve safety and communication as these individuals work together on a regular basis.

Q3. How are the NIMO team positions affected by IFPM?

A3. Since the command and general staff positions on NIMO teams will be primarily managerial in nature, the positions will likely be advertised in the agencies' appropriate series including 340 and 401.

Q4. Would the agencies still use retirees and ADs?

A4. Yes, however, improved hiring practices, similar to FEMA's Disaster Assistance Employees Program need to be developed to address overhead compensation issues.

Q5. Will all those on the NIMO Teams have to be Type 1 qualified in their positions?

A5. Yes.

Q6. Will there be any training positions on the NIMO teams?

Q6. The NIMO IMTs will recruit and mentor trainees within the wildland agencies and non-traditional partners. A significant number of trainees could be used depending on the assignment and available training opportunities.

Q7. How will the jobs be announced?

A7. The job announcements will be available through USAJOBS similar to other positions in the federal agencies. In addition, extra efforts toward recruiting individuals from non-traditional partners, such as contractors, state agencies and local governments will be a part of the NIMO development effort. The NIMO IMTs will also recruit and mentor trainees within the wildland agencies and other partners such as FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration.

A8. If I accept a NIMO position, what does that do to my employment status?

A8. NIMO team positions will be offered as Term Appointments and Interagency Personnel Agreements. Qualified personnel who are interested in applying for a position on a NIMO team should discuss any employment ramifications with their human resource professional.

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